VERSES AND RE-VERSES

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FOR all my life I loved the Muse,
But never found her kind and willing.
To kiss her glove or clasp her shoes—
For this she kept my heart's blood spilling.
She can't be shame-faced if I choose
To sell *such* favours for a Shilling!

VERSES AND RE-VERSES

BY WILFRID MEYNELL

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VERSES & REVERSES

LONG ago I named some contributions to a Magazine *Reviews and Views*. Later, a literary friend (W. E. Henley) liking the turn, gave it another on a title-page of his own. The little game of words proceeded; and we can count among playfellows Mr Kipling, with *Actions and Reactions;* Mr Russell, with *Collections and Recollections;* and the rest.

Like other amusements, this, also, easily palls; and I play it once again only in self-defence. My title is my shelter from critical arrows—those still kept sharp in my own arsenal. These little Verses are, in truth, all Reverses: first thoughts that refuse to obey marching orders, runaways from the right line of formation. I can marshal them into print only under friendly cover of this old manner of label.

THE DEDICATION

To A. M.

OF old, the Prophet breathed upon,
And brought to life, the Widow's son.
This Youngling Verse, from equal death,
Be raised by thine adventuring breath!

Prophet art thou and Child as well:
Thy Present doth thy dear Past spell,—
Thy heavenly Future doth foretell.

ASSOCIATION

IF all belongings of the great
We covet 'neath the hammer;
And, loving dear Charles Lamb, we rate
  Among dear things a stammer;

In rings and armlets if we feel
  The hand of her who owned them;
And, kin of all the martyrs, kneel
  To kiss the stones that stoned them;

If primrosed mound of Hughenden
  Still holds the Town at tether;
And there we best can hear Big Ben
  Above the mere bell-wether;

If Avon's stream is England's wine,
  And Cromwell shrived by Milton;
If men adore in Palestine
  The ground a Cross they built on;

ASSOCIATION

If all great things that go and come
  Lend greatness that endures:—
I, too, am worth a wondrous sum,
  Since I am Yours, am Yours!

THE WELCOME

WHEN you said "Welcome," then the word
New meaning gathered, new depths stirred:
The gift of gifts to me was given.

I will not take that word again
From lips of women or of men:
But at the other gate of Heaven.

THE RELIGION OF THE PLAIN MAN

ADMIRERS of masculine good-looks will remember that two of Gladstone's Three Graces among men were Manning (of whom Aubrey de Vere said that he had "Sacerdos" written across his brow), and Sidney Herbert, whose still handsomer son is the George, Earl of Pembroke, of these verses. The title, "Uncrowned King of Sussex Folks," given to Mr Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, relates to his likeness to Parnell; while another allusion links this favourite of the Muses to Moses, since he, too, would lead his people out of the land of Egypt! Herbert Wilson was the English sculptor who made his home in Florence —an exotic much admired in the City of Flowers. Francis Currie challenged the judgement of Paris, where he lived (an admired figure) for many years. And O.M. stands here for Oliver Montagu. My borrowed title belongs, of course, to one of Mgr Benson's books.

THE PLAIN MAN

HOW proud was I my knee to bow
(When half the world was banning)
Before the bright predestined brow
Of Heavenly-mitred Manning;

Loved Dizzy's hyacinthine locks,
E'er Time's sharp tooth had thinned 'em;
And now ('mid Parliamentary blocks!),
The unalloy'd-George Wyndham!

The uncrowned King of Sussex folk,
Our modern Musing Moses—
His heart as strong as Sussex oak,
His cheeks like wild hedge-roses;

The English sculptor Florence wore;
The Currie that was France's;
George Pembroke, standing six feet four.
The O.M. of romances :—

How royal all! Yet one plain face
Precedence safe secures:
You held it once a moment's space,
It brushed a tear of Yours.

TO HER: AT PISA

THOU finished Tower of Womanhood,
Rooted and fast in Nature's good,
Yet reaching, flower-like, to the skies:
The first to catch the sun—his rise;
And, when the day's for others done,
The last to lose the lingering sun:

Thy walls all treasuries enfold
Within their ivory and gold;
Thou can'st withstand the straitest siege,
Nor askest aid from this thy liege;
Alone thou risest in thy power:
Yet be towards me a Leaning Tower!

THE UNIQUE

WE have one birth, we have one death,
One GOD the FATHER, and one Faith.
And when the Sole Begotten came,
Unique in glory and in shame,
Of one true fold, one pearl of price,
He made His parable's device;
For one Apostle's fervour prayed;
Left ninety sheep for one that strayed.

The beauty of the unit ran
From heaven to earth; till, in Japan,
The decorator sets one bloom,
No tangled bunch, to deck his room.

And so it seems, in my deep heart,
A single flower, You're set apart.
In women, lovers find, who seek,
The type and yet the true Unique.

TO CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

GREAT CHRISTINA, in your singing
Lives the quality of clinging.
In Godward flight when you ascend,
You backward bend to friend and friend;
Is no heart in need of saving
But your hand from Heaven is waving
One, and yet one more, farewell;
When Time importunes you away
You turn to go, yet, turning, stay—
You will not—will you ?—break the spell.
Living and Dead to you are near—
The Dead long lost, but longer dear !

Ah, well I know, in CHRIST's dear name
You sought to lay your laurel down—
It clung—that thorn-enwoven crown :
With feet that failed you, fled from Fame—
It closely clung, your singing-gown!

Poet of GOD, because you cling,
'Mid Seraphim you still shall sing
The songs you sang: their native ring
Is all of Heaven : and me they bring
To cling to you to CHRIST who cling.

TO CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

When I beg prayers, you will not say
(For all you cling) that ancient "Nay"*
You uttered twice on Love's highway:
Albeit you read, on my robe's hem,
Rome broidered with Jerusalem.

There's one who shall beside you shine,
By right of song, that's right divine—
Your singing sister, wife of mine.
So I this kinship dare to draw,
And register in courts above—
That I your brother am in law
Who more than brother am in love.

*Christina refused two suitors—because one was an Agnostic, the other a Roman Catholic.

THE FOLDED FLOCK

I SAW the shepherd fold the sheep,
With all the little lambs that leap.

O Shepherd Lord, so I would be
Folded with all my family.

Or go they early, come they late,
There mother and I must count them eight.

And how, for us, were any Heaven
If we, sore stricken, saw but seven?

Kind Shepherd, as of old Thou'lt run
And fold at need a straggling one.

THE CLIMBER IN THE COT

"I REALLY do not know how I,
Who have no wings, can reach the sky."

Though lowly go your little feet,
Your thoughts can soar and soar, my Sweet,
And, every morn and every even,
Prayer's ladder lift you into Heaven.
So, after death, your body pure,
Well used to heights, shall rise for sure.
What you have loved you then shall be—
High as your aims immortally.

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

AS high up in a house as a nest
In a tree,
They have gone for the night to their rest,
The Babes three.

One will say, when they wake, with arms crossed,
"Jesus blest!"
One will cry "Mother mine"—and be lost
In that breast.

"Ta-ra-ra," then the littlest maid saith,
Two and gay;
And loud laughs with the last of her breath,
"Boom-de-ay!"

What they say, in their nests, these dear birds,
Is all even:
For their speech, be whatever their words,
Is of Heaven.

A PORTRAIT

A PORTRAIT that invites a guess!
Beloved of Painters—who yet miss
The vital Man, the Boy of bliss,
He's MARLBOROUGH, OTTO, "R.L.S."

Her favoured wooer, cool in flame,
BELLONA owns him, every limb;
Yet the soft Muses sigh for him
Who's more than MILTON in his name.

Poet and Soldier; Spanish Don
In custody of Scottish Laird;
Nobler than NELSON (be it dared!)
Adoring Lady HAMILTON.

THE OXFORD DONNA

ONCE on a time, coming into Oxford, Saint Frideswide encountered on her path a young man, so maimed by leprosy that he looked (says the chronicler) like a gray block of stone wherefrom a human figure might be hewn. Peradventure, with "a smile that hurt half of his mouth," he greeted the girl saint; for in a dream it had been shown him that a maiden's kiss would work his cure. She did not falter: she kissed her afflicted brother; and from that moment his flesh was clean.

NOW listen, Alma Mater's sons,
To Oxford's donna—not her dons!

An eager girl, near the Ox ford,
At noonday walked, as with the LORD;

When suddenly a fear she hath
Of one approaching on her path.

His frame his Maker seemed to mock—
Of beings a butt-end or a block.

The tattered lips still left him laughed
In foretaste of a healing draught.

New life, unto his finger-tips,
He dreamed from dear previsioned lips;

And, now his blurred mouth asked her
  this
Most holy healing of her kiss,

Her fresh against his fœtid face
Closed in celestial embrace.

Then all the withered flesh of him
Waxed fragrant, firm in every limb.

And very loud he praised the LORD,
And praised the girl, at the Ox Ford.

Do we that great tradition keep?
Rather than love, we pray or weep;

And tears, howe'er they cleansing be,
Lack Love's sublime fecundity.

Yea, though for me the tears of Nuns
Shine like uncovenanted suns,

I trust that every Oxford churl
Has vision of a mating girl;

And adds to all his learning's store
This little saint's symbolic lore—

Which says no leper soul need miss
Redemption by a woman's kiss;

Assures each bachelor of arts
Life's less a thing of heads than hearts,

And gives him Honours to o'ercrown
All darling dreams of cap and gown.

Such lessons learned, not all in vain
You went to Oxford, lucky swain!

TO COVENTRY PATMORE

YOUR "Angel" bade our swains be pure,
And when with brides their wedding tour
To every "House" in every town
You drew the Heavenly Bodies down;
And then your "Odes" made men arise,
And so repopulate the skies.

Great Teacher, though I heard you teach,
I claim no snatches of your speech.
Yet, since I sing One Woman dear,
Although I falter, you will hear.

THE ALLOTMENT

"Even the kisses of your mouth are numbered."—*The Rhythm of Life.*

ALL things are numbered: Let this be
Warning and joy to thee and me!

The very hairs upon thy head,
Child of my heart, are numberèd;
Yea (and God spare thee any drouth!)
Numbered the kisses of thy mouth.
As ears of corn in happy field
A Heaven-appointed harvest yield,
So all the Gardener grows in thee
Hath well-defined fecundity.
Each tree of life hath statute size,
And as it falls at last it lies.

God gives His graces in good measure,
But measure's there. Use well thy treasure!

Love's softnesses spend one by one,
Lest thou be left with heart of stone,
And only by a miracle
Within that rock shalt find a well.
The very contents of thy tongue,

THE ALLOTMENT

Words still to say and songs unsung,
Are all fore-counted, as the gold
A miser hoards. Let none be told
Out idly. All thy pretty wiles
Of beacon-eyes or beckoning smiles,
Are ticked off daily, one by one,
In angels' ledgers—squander none!
Walk gaily, but not unaware
That God hath counted every stair
Thy feet shall climb. Take one step more—
Thou fallest that high rampart o'er.

But though such calculated doom
Be man's, for comfort is there room.

Thy total, too, of possible sighs
Is entered in God's registries:
Beyond a certain stretch of pain
Thou may'st not pass: the limit's plain.
The sweat of blood that thou shalt bleed
Hath consummation strict decreed:
In thine eye's heaven the silver rains
Are all apportioned—silver chains
'Twixt earth and Heaven, if from thine eyes
Or from the covenanted skies!

Thou shalt exhaust allotted cares;
And even to thine unanswered prayers
Shall come a pausing—to these even
A maximum is set in Heaven.

Yet, at this ending, I would spell
Once more the sweet word, miracle!

In all dear things, thou yet shalt use,
As once the Prophet did, that cruse
That was the Widow's—emptied not
When it had given the whole it got.
Though thou exhaust the allotted store
Heaven, if thou need'st it, give thee more!
And never from the lips of God
Hear thou an awful Ichabod!

OF OLIVE & HER TREE

OLIVE and I, and Olive's tree,
In Italy kept company :
And now and then it seemed to me
The very girl and tree became
Akin in nature as in name.

The Olive has a limb-like stem,
Almost a clinging form:
Signs to the winds, and bends to them,
Obedient to the storm.
So thou to impulse of the skies,
Heaven's heats and frosts, art weatherwise;
And so dost set thy soul's white sails
To take all hither-thither gales.

The Olive's garb of sober grey—
Though sun's transmute it into spray
Of sparkling silver—nun-like seems
By orange glows or lemon gleams.
The eucalyptus from afar
That threats with leafy scimitar
The marsh's fiend; poplar and pine
And oleander—all are mine.
The ilex, with a lustier growth,

The cypress "stepping up the hill"
In funeral march—I love them both.
And yet the little Olive's still
The lady-tree that has my troth.

The Olive wears her raiment grey
All through the altering year,
Unlike some gadding leaves—away
When Winter comes, though he be bare.
Such constancy, dear girl, be thine!
Thou wilt not falter, though the vine
Forget her greenery; though the oak
Evict his own umbrageous folk;
The fig, without one leaf, be seen
After the Fall, till Spring be green;
The lady of the wood, the birch,
New company of leaves each Summer
search.

This tree, whereof I carve my lute,
Bears—is it berry or a fruit?
A richer yield the pear-tree's got,
The apple and the apricot.

But these, once plucked, quick disappear—
The Olive lasts through all the year.

This tree, though sown on slender soil,
Distils for all its generous oil,
Illumes and feeds, and gives to man
Ample reward for all his toil,—
Equips the good Samaritan.
To her who Simple Life essays,
Yet riches yields, be equal praise!

And (O the heights as I account!)
The Olive grew upon the Mount:
It gave cool comfort of its shade
Unto the SAVIOUR when He prayed,
And was the chosen holy tree
That kept His Passion company—
Its dearest likeness, Dear, to thee!

MENDELSSOHN thus wrote from Rome to his brother and sisters in Germany:

"You know how much I dislike, at a distance of two hundred miles, and fourteen days' journey from you, to offer good advice. For once, however, I mean to do so, and I wish to ask you if you cannot devise some domestic recipe to cheer my father up a little? I mean by forbearance and yielding to his wishes, and thus allowing his view on any subject to predominate over your own; then, not to speak at all on topics that irritate him. When I chose to pursue my own path in my musical studies, he was in a constant state of irritation, incessantly abusing Beethoven and all visionaries, and this often vexed me very much. So long, therefore, as I persisted in extolling and exalting my Beethoven, the evil became daily worse; and one day I was even sent out of the room. At last it occurred to me that I might speak a great deal of truth, and yet avoid the particular truth obnoxious to my father, and soon all went well. Strive then to praise what he likes, and do not attack what is implanted in his heart."

A LIFE HARMONY

THE happy Maestro Mendelssohn
One Harmony essayed,
Of all his works the least that's known,
Yet loveliest to be played!

His Songs, and Songs that have no words,
His Night Dream's Overture,
The gentle melody of the Lord's
Elijah,—these endure:

Men worship him for such:
But I—I, rather,
That he, with filial touch,
Composed—his Father!

A WOMAN WITH A PAST

"He had other misfortunes . . . he married a Woman with a Past."—*Private Memoir.*)

NOT she alone who 's labelled "fast,"
But every Woman, has a Past.

Her first and unremembered word—
(Or was it bell, or was it bird?)
Later, her little maiden speech
Confided to her favourite beech:
"Dog, mother, Dad," she told the tree,
That clapped its leafy hands in glee.
Her innocent prayers; her humble vaunt
When she 's a First Communicant—
And hears and fears her parent's boast,
"O what a hostess for the Host."
Her school-room duties, and her car
Of life hitched heavenly to a star.
The difficulties, in and out,
That do not make a single doubt
In maidenhood her dalliance with
Love's ever re-incarnate myth.
The altar at which now she stands—
Her own the sacrificial hands—

Her bride-wreath blossoming from a rod,
Herself an altar built to God.

O luckless husband, if thou hast
A woman wed *without* a past!

THE WINDS OF HEAVEN

THE winds to-night are blowing far—
They blow to me from where you are.
I see them all around you leap—
Enfold your form, your outline keep.

A primal sculptor is the air:
He takes the mould and casts it there:
The great Cathedral; and that host
Of temples of the HOLY GHOST,
In man's, or in thy woman's, form—
These ride with him upon the storm

If men and cities speak of these
As lulls and pauses of the breeze,
'Tis eyes of Love alone are swift
To dream the phantoms as they drift.

O peopled winds, flee not so fast!
I see her come—and then she's past:
Blow to my heart, and harbour there—
That bright inhabitant of air!

MATER BONI CONSILII
ORA PRO NOBIS
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LINES TO G. K. C.

WRITTEN IN ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

AS Job, the Gentile, taught of old
The Orthodox, the Jew:—
So, teaching us within the Fold,
That great outsider, You.

And here this day, beneath this dome,
This Ball and Cross, I think
London shall yet be one with Rome—
And You the living link;

Aye, here within the great Wren-nest
Be bred those homing birds—
The olive-branch that decks their breast—
Your own "dove-nuncio" words.

LOVE'S ARGUMENT

THROUGH earth the news is winged abroad
From Heaven above—
Since God is Love, then love of God
Is love of Love.

On true Love's stage hath no man trod
But knew at heart
He played, as son of Love and God,
A single part.

TO ONE WHO HASTENED HEAVENWARD

AH, if too anxious for the end,
You risk the reaching of it, friend!
The runner who shall win the race
Is careful not to force the pace;
CHRIST is the Way: and so Saints even
Have lingered on the road to Heaven.

A CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE:

"O the Riches!"

GREEN pastured sea, and waves like sheep,
Great clouds that company do keep;
And all land things that love and leap
    And laugh and shine;
The flowers that deck each Season's shoon;
The Woman sandalled with the Moon;
The eyes of children and each star—
I call my own. For His they are,
    And He is mine.

A REPROACH

O CRUELLER far than Cain,
Cain, ignorant of death
Till Abel lay there slain,
Who had not heard
The yet unuttered word
From God's great breath,
"Thou shalt not kill:"—
O crueller far than Cain
Am I who still,
All knowing, stain the Rood
With innocent Blood.

A CHRISTIAN COMFORTED

"A WAVERER, LORD, am I," saith one—
"Here, there, I run."
"My messenger be thou, to tell
Of Heaven to hell."

"How little love, O LORD, I feel—
My heart is steel."
"But I the Magnet am," saith He,
"And steel's for Me."

"Ah, LORD, I lean with love on man
Whene'er I can."
"Who clings to man, My proxy, he
Clings so to Me."

THE TREND

"AS the tree falleth, shall it lie."
But it must fall as it did bend.
Towards Thee, O LORD, Thou knowest I
From sapling days did turn and tend.
Surely as I began I end.

Yet if my acorn struck the earth
At other angle, or the rage
Of storms undid the trend of birth—
Thine is the storm at every stage,
To Thee the roots own vassalage.

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

AT Judgement Day the Judge's word
Shall sound a thing untrue:
"You bade Me, hungry, to your board,
From prison freed Me—you!"

"O when wast Thou a Prisoner
And visited by me?"
"That day you came a-courting her
Who would your true wife be."

"When, though a Stranger, to our house,
Our barred house, did'st Thou come?"
"When you, a husband, took your spouse,
And My spouse, to your home."

"But tell me when, in all my life,
I gave Thee of my food?"
"In breaking bread with child and wife,
My proxy flesh and blood."

The pearl of greatest price lies hid
Within this narrow sea:
"Whatever unto man ye did,
Ye did it unto Me."

WASTE

WE mourn the grain (and men not fed!)
In war-time left to rot:
Ah, women who're unhusbanded—
The corn Life reapeth not!

We weep the budding wife who dies
In bearing baby-bloom:
Alack, the maid who, living, lies
Reluctant in a tomb!

You label vestal volunteers
"The women-waste of Rome":
Oh, weep with those whose secret tears
Baptize sad cells at home!

THE UNITED STATES

IT really is a little odd,
If Marriage has been set by God
Above our human Fates,
To see Divorces, all the same,
In that great Continent whose name
Affirms United States.

America, dear Continent,
If continent you be,
Why let a knot that's tied in heaven
Be loosed in Tennessee?
Be careful lest in mock you're given
The title of "the Free!"

VERBUM AMANTIS

MEN "fall in love," and soar the skies
From earth's profoundest prison:
O change the word as there it lies—
Not *fallen* in love, but *risen*.

A RHYME WITHOUT REASON

RENDERING THE EXCUSE OFFERED BY A GIRL FOR MARRYING A MAN WITH WHOM SHE WAS NOT IN LOVE.

Unmarried girls
Like unset pearls
Run risk of loss;
I let him get me
Just to set me,
Albeit in a cross!

oooooooooooooo

oooooooooooooo

WRITTEN IN A COPY OF "THE HOUND *of* HEAVEN"

"INSCRIBE my name"—your message
came:
And I, from common writing,
Look up for pen, not made by men,
To do such dear inditing.

Only in Heavenly fields can be
Fit plume—the angel-feather
That keeps Life's-Book. O may we see
Our names writ there together!

AN ATOMIC THEORY

MEN serious penalties and pains
With gay "Good-Mornings" meet:
Who yet in bores find deadly banes,
  —In ill-cooked food defeat.

I knew a man with valour cool
  In England's famous fights,
Who fumed with heat because a fool
  Sat on the *Times* at White's.

And ladies, who have never flinched
  When face to face with doom,
Are vanquished by a shoe that pinched,
  A dress just out of bloom.

Bold Henry Stanley found a track
  Through Afric's inmost Dark,
But lost his way (I heard him say)
  In our Saint James's Park!

So write we all our pilgrim-script.
  We crossed our deserts well—
We came to flowery tracts and tripped,
  On parquet-floors we fell.

"IN THE HOUSE OF I-DIE-DAILY"

WOMEN who husband, men who wive
Love cries this lesson loud:
Each other you have wed alive—
Each other in a shroud.

There's tolling in the marriage-chime;
Your grave is in your bed;
Who kiss, are kissing every time
The lips of last night's dead.

Since you began this verse, your life
Hath nearer reached its span:
Haste, husband, to your dying wife,
Wife, to your dying man!

LA PETITE CULTURE

AS peasants from an Alpine side
Scarp out a terrace-plot,
And all the littles gather wide
  To make a little lot;
Who coin to earthly gold the sun,
  Make marble from the dust,
See bread in every proffered stone,
  In every twig a trust:—

  So frugal I seek one by one,
  In life, neglected things.
  To feed my flock I rake the rock,
  Catch thistle-down for pillowings.
  I drink of waters while they run;
  From aftermaths I make my sheaves;
  I find full uniform in leaves,
  And pleasure in—a pun!

THE SISTERHOOD OF THE COMMON LIFE:

OBEYING AT HOME THE RULE OF HUMAN SOLIDARITY.

"I have a pain in my brother's chest."—
Journal of Eugénie de Guérin.

THIS Home-truth from a dear girl's tongue
Did Mother Nature wrest:
"I have an ache, a bleeding lung,
I—in my brother's breast!"
Symbolic Creed, unceasing sung
Where Sisters are Confessed.

A QUEEN'S BOW

ON walks abroad, my heart avows
A wide variety in bows!

Though every woman's nod to me
Is happiness potentially,
This afternoon, when through the crowd
The Queen of England drove, and bowed,
A present gain I understood—
Bow of a woman felt to be
Bow of a woman who was good!
And I continued on my stroll
Saluted by—an aureole!

A woman who has kept her vows
Has benedictions in her bows.

A STAFF OF STAFFORD HOUSE

NO bell, its founders all agree,
Keeps tune with all itself:
And sure in one *belle dame* may be
Sylph, duchess, saint and elf.

* * * *

She makes the little cripples laugh
Around her loving board:
And each shall lend to her his STAFF
When she shall reach the FORD.

THEIR BEST

SHE is a very simple maid—
Nicknamed a "'tweeny";
The cook's and housemaid's riven aid
Christ-named Irene.
And when, in lower regions, she
Hears hurled request,
She laughs or cries: "Oh, right you be,
I'll do my best."

Her very best, be very sure!
She holds it fast—
Religion undefiled and pure.
And, at the last,
When Life, from this sad house of her,
Flits, like a guest,
She'll curtsy to the Judge: "O Sir,
I did my best."

The Judge, for sure, will bow His head;
And, round the throne,
Angels will know to God they've led
His very own.

This sentence then shall gently fall:
"Irene, you
Have done your best: and that is all
Even God can do."

THE SPIRIT OF PLACES:

A LETTER FROM GENOA TO A FRIEND IN CALIFORNIA

AT night in Paris, with my pack,
I hailed in haste a railway hack,
Whose broken knees and spirit spent
Left me the leisure to repent.
Unpitying Paris, how atone
For horses advertising bone,
Raw-hided, on whose quivering hip
The driver cracks his joke and whip?
For me thy diamond air is dust
For all thy levity in lust.
With all men's mothers thou must yet
Make peace for Marie Antoinette—
Thou, in these latter days, whose sons
Go fight with undefended nuns.

In Genoa, as we say, Superb,
The eye there's little to disturb;
And I was glad that I had come
To where Columbus had his home—
And where there's kindness on the kerb.
For in a city set on hills
We fear, for beasts of burden, ills:
Aye, often in the streets of Rome,
I pray to Peter, Turn thy dome,

To raise dumb creatures, blanket-wise,
Who once so dreamed them down the skies!
Let horses here, where travellers cram,
Give thanks to the electric tram;
Let horses all, where'er they are,
Love the allaying motor-car!
At first, conservatively-set,
They shied and bolted when they met
These mad inventions on the road,
And overturned their luckless load,
As twice I'd reason to remark—
One day in Devon driving down
From Dartmoor into Plymouth town,
And once again at Crabbet Park:
For wisest horses fail to know,
As men sometimes, a friend from foe.
Here, now, the city's heights we scale,
And never a horse's heart to fail!
We "hitch our wagon to a star,"
And take the steep funicular.
Unwieldy Germans, very plain,
The Frau and Fräulein swinging arms
As though with *them* they took the road,
The dear American school-marms—
Those nicest innocents abroad—

To Nervi travel now by train;
And French of countless kilogrammes,
Bound for Albaro, board the trams.

Kind to the horse as motor-car,
Big people here to children are—
I therefore like their juice of vine
Far better than the Frenchman's wine,
And know new shining in the star
Set in these Heavens, Saint Catherine.
Nor ever elsewhere have I seen
A people who are quite as clean;
And, be it folly, 'tis my fate
To think men honour Mary, Queen,
Who keep mere streets immaculate.

Now I, who always love a link,
Confess it's very nice to think

'Twas hence Columbus' child-dreams sailed
Towards—where this letter will be mailed.
If men deserve just what they get
And only get what they deserve,
Like his no greatness ever yet!
I here in Genoa bless the fates
That from a City where I'm glad

That horses reasonably serve,
This bright premonitory lad,
Discoverer and Prophet, had
A vision of United States.

My envelope (though stamped) I've ripped
To add—pray pardon—a postscript;
This City, true, had one great miss—
That Ruskin never made her his.
Or did he think her Vandykes bores?
Or, for no reason, love not Chris?
Or grudge the great Renascence doors
The Gothic hid within them is?
Or did he quite forget in *Fors*—
But here I'll rest upon my *ors*!

AN INVITATION *to a* FRIEND TO BECOME *a* SPENDTHRIFT

"I SPEND the Winter abroad."—
A Friend's Letter.

SPEND, as in dreams,
Spend with both hands,
Squander it swift!
Loose the pursed streams,
Melt chaliced lands,
Let pearl snows drift!
Jack Frost that binds
Send reeling forth;
Gamble with winds
And lose the North!
Drink deep of thaws,
Laugh over slips,
And with tree-tips
Tip Santa Claus!
Give to the Poors
(With cold advice!)
Great kohinoors
Of diamond ice!
Announce for sale
The flail of hail;

Disperse those nuns,
The veilèd suns,
And freely fling
Their dormant dowers
To the girl Spring
To spend on flowers!
Be Summer s minter
By melting winter!

"I ENCLOSE MY MITE"

(SEE LETTER FROM LADY MIDAS TO "THE MORNING POST.")

"AND He also saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all."

SHE was a Widow: not so you.
Nor single was her Mite, but two.
Your husband's cheque for income-tax
Made Lloyd George blush, Lloyd George
the lax!
Shame on the blushless dame who cites,
And halves at that, the Widow's mites;
Yet lets her self-complacence feed
On praise of givings from great need.

Widow, long gone, I fear 'tis true
The Poor are poorer now through you.
Your Little All can not requite
The meanness of the Midas mite.
Your farthing bought a million cloaks—
To screen rich empty hands of folks!

"I ENCLOSE MY MITE"

I wish I could in rhyme invent
A less convenient precedent;
And fix your final copyright
In that too much misquoted mite.

LINES TO A VITAL LADY ON HER CHOICE OF A PAINTER

WHO sit to Academic Tom or Ted
Die twice: on canvas they're already dead.
But sitters in a certain Tite-Street chair—
Confession stool some say—sit on for ever there.

There Sargent's brush arrests each rebel look;
His palette-knife rips open life's closed book;
The Present, Past, and Future he divines—
He paints, for men to read between, the lines.
Who pose to him can never have repose—
Alert they live, though green their grave-grass grows.

Lady, as Sargent portraits 'mid the crew
Of languid limnings, 'mid the Living, You!

THE SARGENTINE REPUBLIC

IN the Sargentine Republic all equal "sit"
or "stand"—
And the women are elect in that mighty
canvassed land.
The foolish and the wise, the sinned-against
and Saints
Boast all a common cradle—a Chelsea box
of paints.

GEORGE MEREDITH IN OLD AGE

HIS lonely home—a little box
  Beside a little hill:
Whose spirit raced the great cloud-flocks—
  Scaled Heaven's high Alps at will.

Deafness was his—the frequent "Ehs?"
  Who yet could overhear
What Nature unto Nature says,
  And Love in Love's own ear.

Though silent long on Surrey sod
  The feet that strode and sung,
He soared—who had in strength to GOD,
  And not in weakness, clung.

W. MEYNELL
HIS APPROACHING END

THIS Meynell who is double-you,
(A phrase of double trend),
Himself no more shall trouble you,
Nor yet his pages send.
This Meynell who is W,
Approacheth now his end.

He tried to fly, who had no wings,
And yet his heart avers
That all his poor reversing things,
Reversing still, are HERS.

COMMENTS

"Out of the Mouth of Babes," p. 24.

LOVING a link, I like to note that just after I had copied this verse from an old Palace Court House nursery note-book, I found in my *Daily News* (May 3, 1910), the following paragraph: wherefrom we may gather that in a topsy-turvy world, *Ta-ra-ra*, may be not only Heaven's speech in a cradle—but, on occasion, the Anthem of a nation grown up:

> Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay," the famous music-hall song, is that it attained the dignity of a national anthem. During the Greco-Turkish War, in 1897, a party of British Volunteers were in the habit of visiting a third-rate restaurant in an Athenian by-street, where they fraternised with Greek soldiers, and the little gatherings in due course took the form of impromptu concerts. One evening the Greeks sang their national hymn in unison, and, as the air was catchy, the Englishmen took it up. The Greeks appreciated the compliment from the countrymen of Byron (Beerong, they pronounced the name), and, not to be outdone in courtesy, appealed to the squat proprietor of the restaurant, who had spent a short time in England, to aid them. Mine host advanced from behind his counter, and, taking up a position in the centre of the crowd, commenced in a loud, raucous voice the chorus of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay." The Greek soldiers joined in, and the Englishmen stood up with caps doffed; and, with solemn faces, added their voices.

"He's Marlborough, Otto, 'R.L.S.'" p. 25.

The great Duke of Marlborough "monopolised the graces"; Otto is, in a double sense, the Prince of Fiction; and his creator (who loved him) Robert Louis Stevenson, nearly the only author whom, in sign of familiar kinship, we call by his initials.

"The cypress 'stepping up the hill,'" p. 34.

The quoted words were used by George Meredith in a conversation describing the impression made on him by Italian landscape.

"Her car
Of life hitched heavenly to a star," p. 38.

"Hitch your waggon to a star!" says Emerson, whereas most of us, as a witty lady once remarked, try to "Hitch a star to our waggon!"

"The difficulties, in and out,
That do not make a single doubt," p. 38.

Quoted from a remembered saying of Cardinal Newman's that a hundred difficulties do not necessarily make a single doubt.

"In the House of I-Die-Daily," p. 55.

I will repay my debt for a borrowed title by mentioning how greatly Francis Thompson admired the verse of Bliss Carman in which St Paul is paraphrased.

"A Staff of Stafford House," p. 59.

A Staff, meaning a stave, meaning a stanza.

"Scaled Heaven's high Alps at will," p. 72.

Carinthia saw "all Switzerland" in the skies; and Meredith, writing to A. M. from Boxhill (June 1896), says: "I have had a sail on the clouds with you to-day, across a sky of the hue of your own flower"—his favourite blue iris, which he renamed *Alicia Cœrulea.*

"The frequent ehs?" p. 72.

"I need an arm when I walk, and enliven conversation with the frequent 'eh?'" (Letter from G. M. to "Dearest Portia," May, 1902.)

"The feet that strode and sung," p. 72.

George Meredith used to say that he composed his best poetry as he walked: the feet of his muse kept pace with his own.

"... who had in strength to God,
And not in weakness, clung," p. 72.

George Meredith somewhere wrote that the reason why so many fall from God, after having attained to Him, is that they cling to Him with their weakness, not with their strength.

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